WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — Founded December 19, 1857 MAY 1978

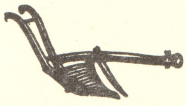
WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This being the last issue of *The Impressions* of our fiscal year, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the directors and members of the society who have given me so much help and support during my period as president. It has been an enjoyable experience, and I will take away a number of good friendships and experiences with me. Thank you.

I would like to mention the Builder's Show booth and thank all of the people who worked to make it such a succcess. Lois Foyle, chairperson of the WCHS committee and those who set up our booth and staffed it during the three day show deserve the gratitude of the society. The show not only gave WCHS goals and projects needed and excellent exposure to the community but it produced approximately $100 in donations for our museum and a number of new memberships. We feel it should be a yearly WCHS project.

Thomas F. Lacy



TOPIC IS 'PALATINES'

Mrs. Albert Rorabacher of Howell, lineage research chairman for the Michigan Daughters of the American Revolution, will speak on the Palatines of Germany at the Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County meeting. It will be at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 28, at Washtenaw Community College. Help session at 1 p.m.

The annual meeting will be held at Harold Jones' cottage at Cavanaugh Lake in June, date to be announced. For further information, telephone 668-6925.

ANNUAL WCHS TOUR SATURDAY JUNE 10 WILL TAKE US TO 'SALTY' COMMUNITY ON OLD CHICAGO ROAD

Saline, one of the communities on the old Chicago Road that Herb Bartlett told us about recently, is the destination of the annual Washtenaw County Historical Society tour Saturday, June 10.

First stop will be the old Schuyler Mill on the Saline River, restored by Henry Ford I in 1938, now Weller's Store. Next will be luncheon at Leutheuser's Restaurant, followed by a stop at the Presbyterian Church, recently restored to nearly its original interior, and finally Harry Finch's farm.

Dan Lirones, of the WCHS board and former president of the Saline Historical Society, is chairman and guide. Carl Weller will talk about the mill. Taylor Jacobson, head of the Saline High School art department, will talk and show slides at the church of earlier days and of the church restoration.

The Finch farm at 9795 Saline-Macon Road is the last stop. Finch, who used to live on the farm with the salt springs from which the community was named, has a good memory and knowledge of local Saline lore, Lirones says. Finch now raises exotic fowl.

Buses are scheduled to leave the Great Lakes Federal parking lot at Washington and Division Streets in Ann Arbor at 10:15 a.m. Reservations may be made by telephoning Vice-President Leigh Anderson at 663-2128 by Monday, June 5. The tour including lunch will cost $6 per person. The menu is barbecued beef on a bun, tossed salad, sherbet and beverage.

PLANNING PLANT SALE

It's the growing season and a great time to start plants for a bigger and better plant sale during Labor Day week next September, according to Lois Foyle, chairperson.

She asks WCHS members and friends to donate plants and plant containers to help raise funds for the museum. The two-day sale netted $400 last year. A few persons are also working on craft items for the sale. It will be September

TO HAVE ART FAIR BOOTH

WCHS will have an exhibit booth under the portico of Great Lakes Federal Savings on Liberty Street during the Ann Arbor Art Fair, July 19-22, to show the proposed museum model and increase public awarenss of the society.

MAN WHO KNOWS MOST OF ITEMS IN WCHS COLLECTIONS TO TALK

The Washtenaw County Historical Society has a large collection of historical items that few of the members have seen because there has been no museum.

Stuart Thayer, curator, will talk about the collection and display some items at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 25, in Liberty Hall at Great Lakes Federal Savings, Liberty at Division Streets, Ann Arbor. The annual meeting with election of board members and officers also will be held at that time.

Since September 1, 1975, Thayer has spent 232 hours cataloguing the collection and he isn't through yet. He will talk about some major donors, the history of its storage places, its curators and its contents.

ICE AGE HERITAGE

LOCAL LANDSCAPE, FOSSIL ZOO

By Gerald R. Smith
Director, U-M Museum of Paleontology

Paleontology, the study of fossils, is a sub-branch of history. It's just that paleontologists interpret different spans of time than historians usually study. I would like to tell you a little about the prehistoric animals and climates of Washtenaw County and Michigan.

Historians are concerned with dates to the year, decade or century. For paleontologists, recent events involve the last 10,000 to 20,000 years. Ordinarily we are unable to draw time lines much finer.

A recent news article told of discovery of a prehistoric forest under thirty feet of silt adjacent to Lake Superior. Scientists are using it to date the advance of ice sheets partially responsible for excavating the Lake Superior Basin.

The last 30 growth rings on those trees show they had essentially stopped growing, indicating the ice was close. Carbon 14 dating shows the glacier was near the forest when previously glaciers were not thought so near.

The geological time scale measures time in millions of years. The rocks are the archives of paleontology, the artifacts are fossils. We have an abundant fossil record extending back 600 million years.

Locally we have preserved in the rock beneath us only three sections of that whole period. If the others ever were deposited in Michigan, they were probably washed or swept away by the ice.

The three periods appropriate to local history are the Devnonian, 300-350 million years ago, the age of fishes; Jurassic rocks, 150 million years ago; and the very latest part of earth history—the last part of the last three million years.

Devonian rocks are those you see exposed in quarries south of Ann Arbor to Sylvania, Ohio—gray limestones that are used for building materials in this area. There are just a few Jurassic rocks near Grand Rapids from the age of dinosaurs. Those of us in the business have never seen a real fossil of a dinosaur in Michigan. I think it is a safe assumption they did live in Michigan but we just don't have any record. Later, from the Ice Age, we do have records in abundance of two groups of elephants—mammoths and mastodons.

The little snowflake crystal which caused all the trouble last January is also responsible for what has to be one of the most important things to happen in North America. Much of what we see and even the cultural aspect of our lives is influenced by the fact that much of North America was covered with ice off and on in the past three million years.

This was not a thin sheet of ice—in places it reached a thickness of several miles. Naturally with this much weight it gouged out and depressed parts of the earth's crust. The Great Lakes basins are a local effect. In the ice age, they were big buried valleys, completely covered with ice. It wasn't pretty blue or white ice—it contained many boulders, dirt, silt and even old trees.

The ice lobes grew both by pressure from accumulation further up north and on the edges. They actually moved. Local evidence is found in structures called moraines. They are the basis of almost all the hills in southern Michigan. They are just bunches of gravel dropped by the giant lobes of ice.

Killins Gravel Pit some 40 years ago was one of these hills. It was mined to produce highways and runways at Willow Run Airport. Because steel wasn't available for reinforcing during the war years, they had to lay concrete three feet thick. That's why the runway still works.

The ice declined 10,000 years ago. As it melted back, it created great ponds of water. It had to run off in some direction. At some stages it ran down the Mississippi Valley, at others down the St. Lawrence seaway of today. But there was an intermediate stage when there was a water passageway to the north—the North Bay outlet to the St. Lawrence, used by Indians and most early explorers. That is why northern Michigan was explored first.

Changes in sea level of several hundred feet were another major effect of the ice. Some 15,000 years ago when a large proportion of water was stored in ice miles thick on the continents, the eastern U.S. shoreline extended many miles out into what is now ocean. If all the existing ice now in Greenland and Antarctica should melt, the shoreline would move inland.

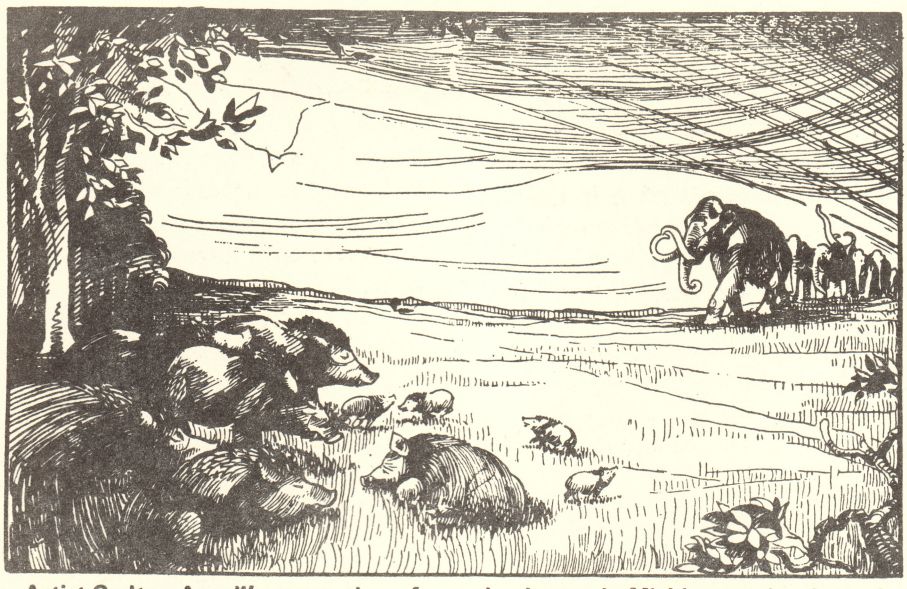
When the ice was stored over eastern North America, for some reason the western corridor through Alaska to Asia was not glaciated. Furthermore, sea levels were so low that Asia and North America were connected by a strip of land several hundred miles wide.

People as well as animals used this land bridge. The fossil records of people are the domain of archeology—another kind of history.

If you drive to Detroit Metropolitan Airport, you pass several long wooded hills, but from Ypsilanti on, the land is low and flat. That's because we enter the old lake plain.

While we owe our attractive local hills and lakes to glaciers, there is a little more to the story. As you approach State Street from the west you drop down into a very sharp little valley. This is the former course of the Huron River. The river flowed south from Barton Dam just west of State Street to the Saline and Raisin Rivers and Lake Erie. (It is roughly the route of Allen's Creek, now flowing in the opposite direction in a pipe, and the Ann Arbor Railroad.)

At some point after the last



Artist Carlton Angell's conception of an upland scene in Michigan at the close of glaciation. Band of peccaries in foreground, hairy Jefferson mammoth approaching.

glaciation, a headwater stream that emptied into Lake Erie north of the Raisin cut back through these moraines and entrenched deeply enough to pirate the entire upper Huron River and take it out the present channel.

A couple of years ago some high school students were digging in an exposed bank of gravel of a moraine near Huron High School and found a skull. They took it to a U-M professor who studies mammals and he said, "Yes, that is a nice skull, but it is just a barnyard pig."

A paleontology professor saw it on his shelf and asked where he got that peccary skull. Peccaries had been discovered in Washtenaw County in the early 1920's but the specimens loaned to an east coast museum were not returned.

A U-M crew found two more skulls plus other bones near Huron High. The bones are in nearly perfect condition and that is why the first professor could not believe they were 11,000 years old.

Jaw bones of black bears have been found in morainal deposits in Washtenaw County as well as elk and caribou antlers and antlers of an extinct deer-moose. Another surprising local inhabitant 15,000 years ago were musk-oxen, animals that today are only found up around the Arctic Circle.

Even stranger are the giant beaver. Bones discovered indicate it was about the size of a black bear and had a long round tail rather than a flat one.

German scientists diagrammed the modern beaver to the same scale as the giant beaver. Their results show the modern beaver had a much larger brain compared to body size and it has been suggested that giant beavers could not construct houses and dams. This is somewhat backed by the fact there aren't any fossil dams.

Last summer mastodon bones were discovered on property in Washtenaw County that was being dredged for an ornamental pond. The bones, generously donated to the museum, are on display. Found were the upper part of the skull with upper and lower teeth, vertebrae, pieces of tusk and leg bones.

The female mastodon skeleton on exhibit in a University museum is a local specimen found and sold to the U-M many years ago. A straight-on look at the face shows a large hole in the middle of the forehead. It is the back opening of the nostrils, the front being out at the end of the trunk.

However, when the ancient Greeks found fossil mastodons they did not realize this. They could tell where the teeth and tusks were. But to them, these creatures obviously had a single eye right in the middle of the forehead and they lived underground since that was where the bones were found. That is the origin of the cyclops myth.

Two kinds of elephants lived in Washtenaw County—mastodons and mammoths. We tell them apart by their teeth. The teeth of mammoths have ridges on the sides to grind grass. The mastodons had much simpler teeth, adapted to tearing branches off trees and chewing them up. We find mammoths more in western grassland areas of Michigan and mastodons in swampy areas.

There are mastodon bones in almost every swamp in southern Michigan. However, something limited these animals so they did not live north of Saginaw Bay. We have 170 records of mastodons in Michigan and about half as many mammoths.

Perhaps the most surprising fossil found in Michigan in that age sediments are whale bones. We have fossils both from when the Great Lakes drained into the Mississippi and into the St. Lawrence.

We know from the volume of water that was coming off these giant melting glaciers that the Mississippi River was probably two to five miles wide and very deep. We have to presume that whales could swim up it. Although we may be totally wrong, I cannot think of a more likely explanation although this one is a bit troublesome.

In the last 10,000 years ice has periodically advanced and retreated. If we look at just the last 4,000 years we see a little expansion, a contraction, another expansion about 1,000 B.C. Two thousand years ago, glaciers were probably further back than today, then expanded, creating a little ice age. We may be at the end of a little ice age—or the beginning of a larger one.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

CHELSEA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Board meeting in early August to plan booth at Chelsea Fair the last week in August.

DEXTER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Museum display, June-July: Pipe collection, graduation pictures, old-fashioned picnic items in addition to permanent displays. Open 1-3 p.m. each Tuesday and second and fourth Saturdays of each month. August-September displays, Boy and Girl Scout items, special dollhouse.

Annual meeting, 1 p.m. Sunday, July 30, home of Heloise Dunstan, W. Huron River Drive. Potluck dinner.

MANCHESTER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Robert T. Ross, publicity chairman for 25th Annual Manchester Chicken Broil, will talk about the event's history at 8 p.m. Monday, June 26 at Methodist Church. The broil will be 4 p.m. Thursday, July 20.

Lydia Muncy, chairman of the Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, will speak on oral history at 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 23, at Methodist Church.

MILAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY—7:30 p.m., third Monday each month of summer at Milan Community House. Booth, Milan Fair July 9-15.

The society will help Monroe County Historical Society host a Northwest Territory Association encampment July 29-30 at Monroe Community College grounds. That group will authentically recreate 1700's dress, food and battles when Monroe was known as Frenchtown.

Information and tickets in the form of buttons for $1 are available from President Warren Hale at 439-1551 (days) or 439-1226.

Participants make their own costumes in leather and homespun. The militia costume is complete to a pewter spoon in the belt. Craftsmen may exhibit there but they must do it authentically—no dipping candles over propane stoves. The only compromise is the health department insists food sold to the public must be prepared in licensed kitchens. Beans, stew, cornbread and such are planned—no pop and french fries.

SALEM HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Picnic noon Saturday, June 24, at Northfield county park on Pontiac Trail next to German Park. Each family asked to bring own table service, beverage, meat and dish to pass.

SALINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Date of annual June picnic to be announced. Society hosting WCHS tour of Saline June 11, with Dan Lirones as tour chairman. Committees will work through summer on October 1 homes tour.

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Walking tour of seven downtown churches Sunday, June 25, starting at museum, 220 N. Huron St., where map and brochure will be available. Members at each church will give a brief history. The churches are St. Luke's Episcopal, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Brown Chapel A.M.E., St. Johns Catholic, and Christian Science.

July museum display, war artifacts; May, Michigan Week display by Flora Block in cooperation with public schools. Museum open 2-4 p.m. each Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Program on Panama, 3-5 p.m. Sunday, May 21, at museum.

NEW GENEALOGY AID

Alloa Anderson and Polly Bender have published a new "how-to" aid, *Genealogical Research Libraries.* It is available for $2.50 by telephoning 663-2128 or 668-6925. Their first publication, *Genealogy in Michigan,* is nearly sold out.

MARQUETTE DIDN'T DO IT

LaSalle discovered the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1682, Dr. Howard Ross reminds us. The editor incorrectly credited Marquette in the last issue.

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER

This is the last issue of *The Impressions* until next September. Many thanks to Anna Thorsch for keylining, Great Lakes Federal and Cyn Klingler for printing, Drury, Lacy, Inc. staffers Mike McGraw and Mary Lammers for production help and Ethelyn Morton, WCHS secretary for mailing preparation. See you next fall.

WASHTENAW COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEETING

8 P.M., THURSDAY
MAY 25, 1978

Liberty Hall

Great Lakes Federal Savings
Liberty at Division

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